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Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,253,120 to Levine in view of U.S. Patent 5,047,861 to Houchin et al. ("Houchin"). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Levine in view of Houchin, and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,396,539 to Heller et al. Claim 5 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Levine in view of Houchin, and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,184,529 to Contini. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The proposed combination of Levine in view of Houchin does not teach or suggest a **pixel defect detector** in which output characteristics are obtained for at least three amounts of incident light.

Levine discloses a defect detection means for charge transfer imagers. According to the system of Levine, spurious samples obtained from a defective pixel are corrected by replacement with an interpolated value derived from its neighboring pixels (see column 6, lines 40-44; see also FIGS. 1 and 2).

Referring to column 1, lines 54-59 of Levine, the defect detection means is capable of real time detection of spurious signals. However, Levine does not teach or suggest the use of at least three amounts of incident light, as recited in claim 1, which enables calculation of a photoelectric coefficient or an offset output level using the least squares method. Levine does not discuss the calculation of these values.

The Houchin reference was cited allegedly to remedy the deficiencies of Levine. In particular, column 8, line 66 through column 9, line 12 of Houchin was cited allegedly for disclosing "obtaining output characteristics of a subject photoelectric transducer for at least three amounts of light incident thereupon," as recited in claim 1 (see Office Action of 02/08/2006 at page 4, first and second paragraphs).

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However, the invention of Houchin "relates to the field of image processing and more particularly to an apparatus for reading and correcting a sensed color image on an individual pixel basis" (column 1, lines 7-10 of Houchin).

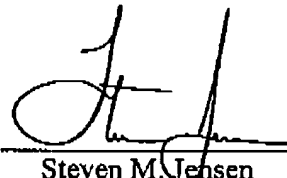
One of ordinary skill in the art would not look to combine an image processing apparatus "for reading and correcting a sensed color image on an individual pixel basis," as taught in Houchin, with the defect detection means of Levine. That is, there would not be sufficient motivation for a skilled person to combine a defect detection means and an image processing apparatus "for reading and correcting a sensed color image" of Houchin.

It is believed the application is in condition for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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By:



Steven M. Jensen
(Reg. No. 42,693)

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge
P.O. Box 55874
Boston, MA 02205

Phone: (617) 439-4444

Customer No. 21874